

Congressman NEIL ABERCROMBIE



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July 2006

Housing Affordability

Dear friend:

The lack of affordable housing is a chronic problem in Hawaii and I am committed to easing this burden. I have been fighting to create additional housing affordability opportunities, protect current housing programs from funding reductions or elimination, and make home ownership accessible for all.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) in Hawaii for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,159. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities –without paying more than 30% of income on housing—a household must earn \$3,865 monthly or \$46,378 annually. In Hawaii, a minimum wage worker earns an hourly wage of \$6.25. In order to afford the

FMR for a two-bedroom apartment, a minimum wage earner must work 143 hours per week. Or a household must include 3.6 minimum wage earners working 40 hours per week year-round in order to make the two-bedroom FMR affordable.

The issue of housing affordability is one of the biggest concerns of kama`aina. A case in point is the widespread community concern about the proposed sale of one of the state's largest affordable rental projects, Kukui Gardens. I am currently working with all parties, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), to ensure that an equitable solution is found for all. We must seek creative solutions to expand our supply of affordable housing.

I am working with the city to bring federal dollars to Hawaii for a mass transit system. This integrated network of walkways, bike routes, rail lines, bus stops, and highways will support the development of affordable housing and encourage commercial opportunities along the proposed route. With integrated planning, we can match future housing needs with transportation infrastructure. Development rights around transit stops can be leveraged for true housing affordability that will put home ownership within the reach of our island's working families. In short, mass transit will provide everyone with opportunities beyond transportation.

I have also joined with my colleagues in Congress to:

- expand affordable housing availability and protect HUD affordable housing programs like the Section 811 Disabled Housing program and the Section 202 Elderly Housing program;
- provide funding to localities to invest in safer and more affordable communities;
- strengthen Section 8, which allows tenants to have a choice in their housing needs through the use of vouchers; and
- create a National Housing Trust Fund that would build and preserve 1.5 million units of rental housing for the lowest income families over the next 10 years.

Recognizing that many of Hawaii's working families live one paycheck away from homelessness, you can be sure that I will continue to fight for more funding for homeless, transitional and supportive housing programs. Housing affordability affects all of Hawaii's people. It will take everyone's involvement to meet the challenges in the future. I invite you to send me your comments regarding this issue or other concerns you may have.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil", with a stylized, cursive script.

Neil Abercrombie

Member of Congress

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